

International Conference for Physics Students

Report By: Austin Basye

Introduction

First of all, I have to say that I was pretty stoked to hear that I would be presenting some of my research to a few of my international peers, let alone it be in London. In fact, after the members of my collaboration heard the news, I had no shortage of Europeans enthusiastically giving suggestions on where to go, what to see, and what food to avoid. I have been surrounded by collaborators from Europe for a while and finally I was given the opportunity to see the places they called home. Also, it was London for goodness sakes! Who wouldn't like an "all expenses payed" trip to London? That's right, no one.

Traveling

So the trip began with the obligatory tears and kisses to the mom and girlfriend followed by a 14 hour trip to London Heathrow airport via Chicago O'Hare with my Dad. (A pretty cool father/son trip if I do say so) The upside was that I got to fly in a Boeing 777, which, to a kid fascinated by airplanes, was pretty cool. It had the touch movie screens in each seat and all the other bells and whistles. All of this was new and exciting for the first hour and a half, after which, the glamor of international air-travel faded with each passing moment. Of course, the over-enthusiastic 6 year old a few seats down didn't make the trip seem any faster.

Finally, we arrived in London and after 2 hours of the usual Customs and Immigration mess. We then found ourselves chilling out in the "tube," headed to Russel Square, "Minding the Gap" at each of the 14 stops. Ninety minutes later we arrived at the Russel Square station, home of the July, 7th 2005 terrorist bombings. In a hurry to get to the hotel my father and I, dragging our unwieldy luggage, decided to forgo the lengthy elevator ques and head to stairway. Unfortunately in that process we missed the sign pointing out the 177 stairs. 25 minutes after that miscalculation we made it to street level, after being humorously congratulated by numerous locals.

The Sights

My father and I spent the first few days seeing the sights. We walked to Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus, Westminster Palace, and we spent the rest of the day in the **FREE** British Museum. Trafalgar square was amazing and right in front of the National Gallery, definitely a photo opportunity. A collaborator from London spoke to me about London and told me that Piccadilly Circus was the "Times Square of London." Well, I must say that there were indeed similarities but Piccadilly is no Times Square. This actually is a recurring comparison I made as I walked through downtown London. New York City and London are extremely similar on most if not all respects save one recurring theme, London's exquisite history.

The Conference

The actual conference was a blast. It was very well organized and the lectures were relevant and enlightening, if not well attended. I was intrigued by the bio-physical field with which I have previously had no interaction. The more notable lectures I attended included a humorous lecture on the military applications of lasers during which there were repeated references to the United States' desire

for world domination (I don't think he knew I was there). In addition, I made it to the end of a lecture on “Vedic mathematics” during which the lecturer was lambasted by numerous skeptics in the audience. She gallantly defended her arguments though, if only with hand waving.

The Parties

Besides the lectures, the numerous parties took up a substantial amount of the actual conference activity time which was somewhat unexpected. The “Costume Party” featured the UK delegation The “National Party” was quite an experience. I convinced myself that it was necessary to try every food present. Thats right: curry “stew-ish” stuff from the U.K.; sausages from Germany, Hungary, Turkey, and Romania (the meat from which could not be determined); tiramisu and pasta (40kg) from Italy. Through it all, I had my “Safety Donut,” to clear my mouth of something awful if it came to that... and it did, twice. For future reference, avoid Danes offering raw haddock on a cracker, and Finns offering “Mämmi” (for a recipe look here <http://www.finnguide.fi/finnishrecipes/toprecipes.asp?c=2&t=&p=81>).

Conclusions

All in all, it was an excellent experience that I will have for the rest of my life. I encourage Americans to take more of an interest in this organization as it will build and maintain international relationships that will come to fruition more and more as our world continues to shrink. Future areas of research will require in-depth collaboration with international counterparts and the this experience lays down the foundations of these future efforts.

